

SOFTWARE HELP

Converting Magix Music Maker files to MP3

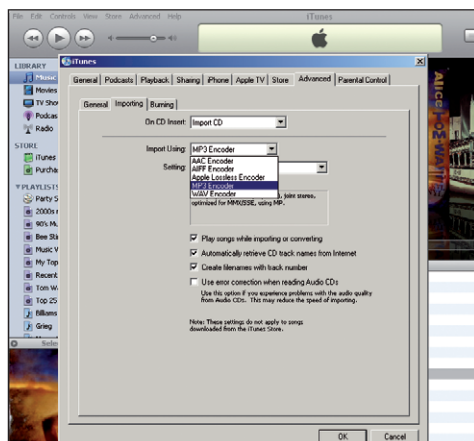
Q I have Magix Music Maker 2005 on my PC. You can only use the MP3 converter that comes with it 30 times and then you must upgrade. I can't activate the upgrade without the activation code and to do this I need the serial

number, which I can't find. Can you suggest software to convert the .MMM files of Magix Music Maker into MP3 format without having to apply for the upgrade?

Nicholas Unsworth chironart123@yahoo.co.uk

A Magix Music Maker's MP3 export facility uses an encoder licensed from Fraunhofer, to which Magix must pay a royalty. This is why your copy of Music Maker only includes a demo version of the MP3 encoder. The .MMM files can be read only by Magix Music Maker, but if you export your music as a .WAV file, you can convert this into an MP3 using a variety of programs, including iTunes. This uses the LAME MP3 encoder, which doesn't require a royalty payment and allows Apple to distribute iTunes for free.

To convert a Wav file to MP3, download and install iTunes from www.apple.com/itunes. Then click Edit, Preferences, the Advanced tab and the Importing subtab. Change the Import Using: option to MP3 Encoder, and adjust the bit rate as necessary – 'High Quality (128kbps)' is the most common. Click OK to close the dialog box, drag your Wav file into the iTunes music library, right-click it and select Convert Selection to MP3. You can then drag the MP3 back out of iTunes to the Windows desktop or another location. **BP**



▲ iTunes can convert uncompressed Wav files into MP3 or AAC formats

Tailoring financial data in Access

Q I'm storing financial data in Access, and I need to be able to show when the data in a record has been changed. I have a time/date field that I've formatted to show both the date and the time, and have set its default value to =Now(). It sets the value when the record is first created, but it stays at that initial value thereafter.

How can I make Access automatically change this 'LastChanged' field whenever the user tabs through the field while changing the record?

Jane Elridge

A We don't think that the method you're proposing will necessarily give you the answer you need. What happens if someone tabs their way around the form and doesn't make a change, or doesn't use the tab key to move round the form but clicks on a specific field and makes the change anyway?

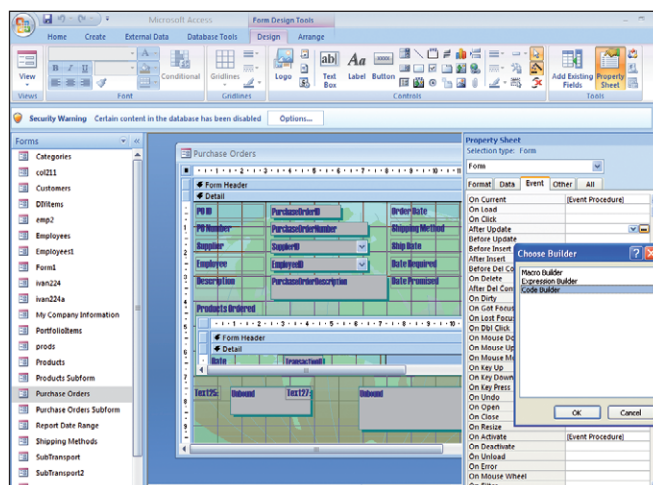
Rather than updating the field when the user tabs through the form, it would be better to attach some code to the entire form's AfterUpdate event. This will change the field only if the data has been changed. However, this still doesn't show if someone updates the underlying data directly in the table. In other words, you can show when the record was normally and innocently updated, but if someone wanted to change the financial information in a covert fashion and not have the date updated, they still could.

With that caveat in place, you should click on the top-left corner of the form, where the small black rectangle is shown, and view the form properties. On the Event tab, choose AfterUpdate and select EventProcedure from the choices offered.

Complete the empty procedure that appears, so it looks like this:

```
Private Sub Form_AfterUpdate()  
    [ThisRecUpdated] = Now  
End Sub
```

Replace the reference to ThisRecUpdated to refer to the name of your own form. **KE**



▲ Use the AfterUpdate property to maintain a current time and date field

YOUR EXPERTS

Contact Software Help for software advice and answers

Kay Ewbank

Database developer and productivity expert Kay Ewbank offers help with office applications.



Ben Pitt

Professional musician and keen photographer Ben Pitt gives advice on using creative software.



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How do I fix my Access reports?

Q I have an Access 2007 report with several columns, including one that's a calculated column. Both the original data values are also included on the report, so I have Height in metres, Weight in KG, and BMI calculated in the report as $\text{BMI} = \text{Weight} / ([\text{Height}] * [\text{Height}])$.

I want to put a field in the footer showing the average BMI, and I'm trying to use the Avg function, but it doesn't work. I'd also like to show those rows where the BMI is above 30 (so the patient is classified as obese) in red. Is there an easy way to do this?

M Patel

A The first reason you might be having problems is because Height is an Access reserved word. You need to change your column names; go for PWeight and PHeight instead. A second potential reason is that when evaluating expressions, Access can get confused if you have controls on your report (or form) with the same name as the

fields in the form's or report's underlying record source. Access can't work out whether you mean the control on the form or the control in the underlying data source, so it can't evaluate the expression. You need to rename the controls.

View the properties for the control and look in the Other tab. Check the Name property and set it to be different from the default value, which is the same as the underlying Control Source. You can see the name of the Control Source in the Data tab.

The final reason (which will definitely cause problems with the Avg function) is that the SQL aggregate functions (Sum, Max, Count and Avg) don't know anything about controls on reports or forms; they work only on columns. You need to calculate based on the original columns, as in:

$\text{Avg}([PWeight]/([PHeight]*[PHeight]))$

Now on to the requirement for showing the rows where the BMI is above 30 in red. If you just wanted to have the actual BMI figure displayed

in red, it would be relatively easy. Choose to view your report in Layout View and click on the control to which you want to apply the conditional formatting. Then look on the Format tab of the ribbon and, in the Font group, click the Conditional button. You'll see the Conditional Formatting dialog box appear. On the line saying Condition 1, set the condition to:

Field Value Is Greater Than 30

In the format to use, set the font colour to red.

You could add more conditions. For example, a BMI between 25 and 30 signifies that someone is overweight, so you could have another condition of:

Field Value Is Between 25 And 30

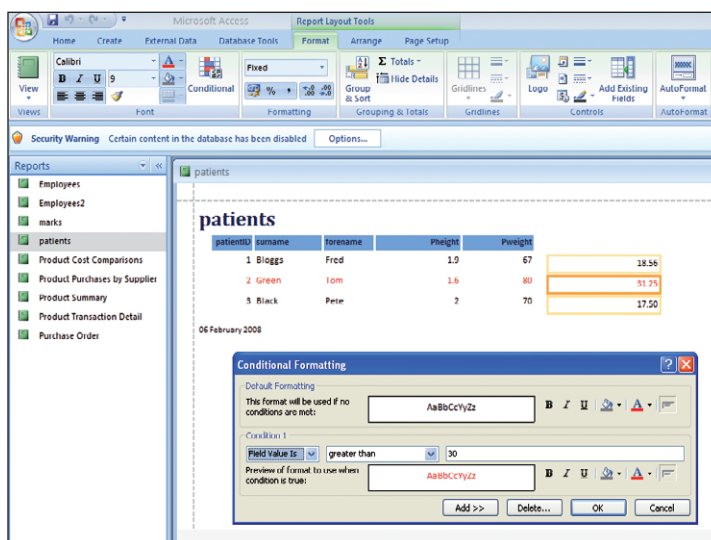
You could also set the conditional font colour to orange, say.

If you want to show the whole row in a different colour then you will need to use a slightly different method. Instead of basing your condition on a field value, you have to use an expression. Select all the controls to which you want to apply the format using Shift-click and then click the Conditional button.

The Conditional Formatting dialog box will appear, and you can then set up the condition. For Condition 1, change the 'Field Is' box to 'Expression Is' and then type the expression that identifies when the colour should be changed in the box at the right of the list. Your condition will be something like:

$[\text{text15}] > 30$

Your condition will look like this if the control holding the BMI calculation is called text15. You shouldn't put an equals sign at the start of the expression. Once you've entered the expression, set the formatting and you should find your report highlights all those people with a BMI greater than 30. **KE**



◀ Use Conditional Formatting to highlight data values on a report

Viewing slides in PowerPoint

Q I have a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation that was copied from one machine to another. Unfortunately, many of the slides have images that are not being displayed correctly. All I get is a box with a red X in it. I can select them, and the square frame appears, but I cannot find any way to see what the original image was or where it was located. I can change the picture to a new one, but that doesn't help me.

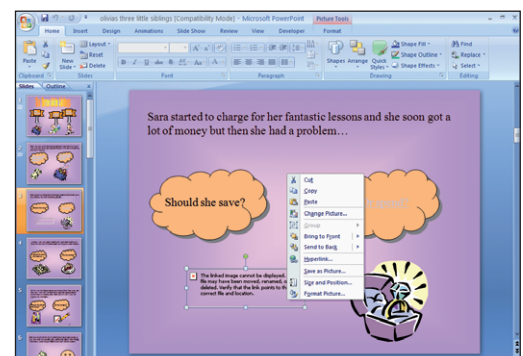
I have two questions. First, how can I get my old pictures back? Second, does this mean that if I create other PowerPoint presentations with linked images, the links are always going to be saved in some format that means the pictures will not appear if I copy the presentation to a CD, for example? Your advice would be appreciated.

Mike Bell

A PowerPoint is notoriously bad at dealing with linked images. The problem you describe is well known in all versions, including PowerPoint 2007. In general, it's safer to embed your images, especially if you are planning on distributing your presentations to other people.

However, before you can make this decision, you need to mend your broken presentation. The easiest method would be to go back to the original and change all the linked images to embedded images. If this isn't possible, select the box with the red X and, from the right-click menu, choose Copy. Then open another application such as Word and paste the broken item into there. This will at least let you see the name and original location of the missing image. You can

then find that image (or a suitable replacement) and insert it back into your presentation. It's time-consuming, but it works. **KE**



▲ Missing images that are linked cannot be edited in PowerPoint

Numbering equations automatically

Q I am studying maths and I would like a simple way to number my equations in my assignments automatically without having to buy extra (expensive) software. I have attached a small extract from one of my assignments to show you how I'm doing it at the moment.

As you can see, I am currently numbering the equations by hand for referencing. However, this is prone to error when I attempt to insert an equation later. It would also be handy if I could automatically

reference a few specific equations. I would be very grateful if you could help me.

Tim Barnett

A You need to use the SEQ field. This can be used to create sequential numbers for your tables, equations, or even the chapters in your document.

Word automatically handles the renumbering if you move, insert or delete an item that has a SEQ number. To use SEQ, choose Insert Field.

If you use Word 2007 you'll find similar functionality in the References tab, under Captions.

Insert an SEQ field like this:

{SEQ equ \n}

This starts a sequence under the reference of equ, so the first time you insert this you'll get equation 1, the second time equation 2, and so on.

You can have more than one sequence in the same document. So for figures you might have:

{SEQ fig \n}

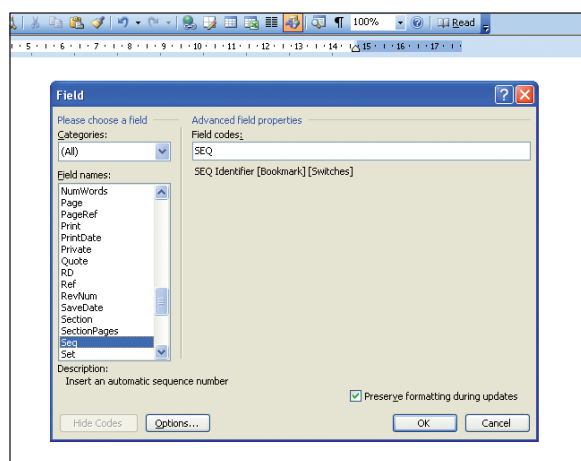
The name you use has to start with a letter and it must be no

longer than 40 characters long. The \n tells Word to increment the sequence each time it reaches the next reference.

You can refer to an equation by bookmarking it. For example, you would mark the SEQ field numbering for that equation with the bookmark Equation3. You could then insert a cross-reference to it by using Insert, Reference, Cross-Reference. You would then choose the particular bookmark you wanted to use for the source of the cross-reference. If you would like to let the reader of the document jump to the referenced item, make sure you tick the 'Insert as hyperlink' option.

When you're working with fields, it's worth remembering that you can swap between seeing the field codes and the results of the field codes by pressing Alt-F9.

If you need a more complex format of numbering, you can use the LISTNUM field. If you want a Figure 3.5.1 type of listing then LISTNUM is the field you need. It's used in a similar way to SEQ. The only difference is that Word takes over the working out and maintenance of the numbering. All you do is specify the starting value. There are three predefined list names: AUTONUM, AUTONUMOUT and AUTONUMGL, each of which has its own formatting. You can get up to nine levels of numbering using LISTNUM, and it uses the 'level' property of the paragraph you're in to decide what is displayed. **KE**



▲ Use SEQ fields to number equations automatically

Checking misspellings in Excel

Q I use Excel and have spreadsheets with hundreds of rows of text. When I try to check the spelling, I have a problem when the word is entered incorrectly AND misspelt or mis-entered in the cell. One such word is rrp, which should be entered RRP. When Excel gets to this word in the list, it tells me the word isn't in the dictionary. My options are to change the word (which changes it to the highlighted word from the list of suggestions), or to add the word (which adds the incorrectly spelt word). What can I do to put this right?

P Brown

A Excel shares many of its spell-checking options with Word, and it can sometimes be easier to make changes in Word than it is in Excel. However, you can specify most changes in Excel, too.

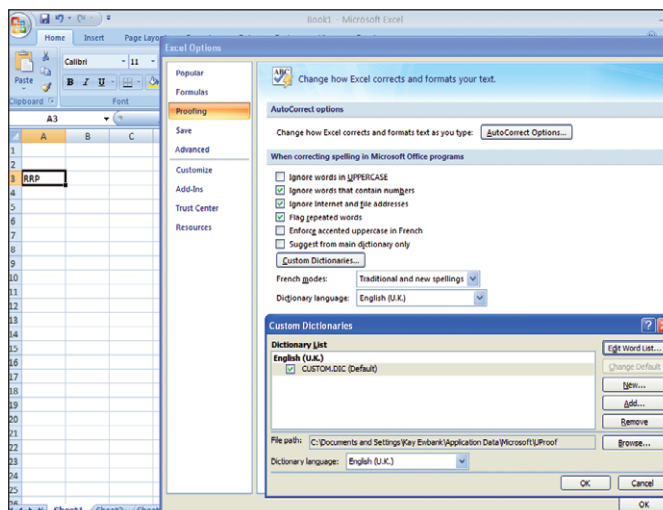
You need to see if Excel is set up to check the spelling of words in upper case. This usually isn't the case with Office spellchecking. If that's true with your copy, it won't help with the problem you're reporting. Look in Options (in Tools, Options, Spelling and Grammar in Excel before 2007, and in Excel Options in the Office menu in Excel 2007). Look in Proofing (or Spelling and Grammar) and if the 'Ignore words in Uppercase' option is selected, untick it.

Next, look for words you've added with an incorrect spelling. To do this, look in the

Proofing or Spelling and Grammar menu again, and click on the Custom Dictionaries button. Choose the Default dictionary and select the option to edit the word list. You'll see all the words that have been added to your dictionary, and you can find any incorrect items and delete them. It's wise to do this now and again, as it's surprising how many incorrect entries get added.

Now we come to the problem of adding the word in the correct case. This solution may sound odd, but it does get the results you want with

only a bit of extra work. We suggest you start spellchecking your spreadsheet. When you encounter the first instance of rrp in lower case, press Cancel to stop the spellcheck and manually correct that entry to RRP. Then restart the spell checker. It will reject RRP as not being in the dictionary, and you can simply choose the option to add it to the dictionary. You can then continue your spellcheck routine. When you encounter all the other cases of rrp, you will be given RRP as a possible correction. **KE**



◀ Excel's spellchecker shares its dictionary with other Office applications



How do I DJ with Ableton Live?

Q I recently downloaded the demo of Ableton Live, as I've heard it's great for DJing and remixing, but I'm struggling to make sense of it. Please can you give me some pointers as to how it can be used for DJ purposes? Also, can I get by with Live LE, or is it worth getting the full version? *J Broadbent, Sandhurst*

A Ableton Live is a great DJ tool, but it doesn't work in the same way as most DJ software such as Pioneer DJ (What's New, Shopper 224). It's not ideal if you just want to play lots of MP3s from a laptop, but for sophisticated DJ performances and live remixing there's nothing else like it.

Live's Session View presents audio objects as a grid of clips. Each clip might be an entire MP3 or Wav track, a one-bar drum loop or any other audio or MIDI recording. Each has a Clip Launch button, which triggers the clip at the beginning of the next bar. This helps clips play

in time with each other. Once you have a few clips in place, trigger them as a performance by clicking their Clip Launch buttons. Only one clip per channel (vertical column) will play, so if you want to play two at the same time, place them in different channels.

It's not enough for tracks and loops to start in time with each other; they must stay in time, too. Live has an impressive automatic tempo-mapping feature, but it sometimes needs help. Drop an MP3 or Wav file from the Browser on to a Clip slot and the software will detect its tempo, even for rhythmically complex tracks with a gradually shifting tempo. However, it often fails to establish the downbeat of the bar. To fix this, double-click the clip to view its properties. Click and drag the top half of the waveform to zoom in, and click the bottom half to start playback. Turn on the metronome (the button with two circles near the top-left of the screen) to check that Live is playing the track in time with the master tempo. If it's in time but not starting in

the right place, find the beginning of the first full bar, right-click the marker above it and select Set 1.1.1 Here. If it's still not right, create Markers manually to keep the track in time. If necessary, delete all existing ones by right-clicking the first downbeat and select Warp From Here (Straight).

Tracks should now play in time with the master tempo, but the time-stretching used to achieve this might make them sound garbled. To avoid this, switch the Warp Mode from Beats to Re-Pitch. You'll find this option to the left of the waveform display. Doing so makes tracks change in pitch as they change in tempo, exactly as vinyl does. The full version of Live has an additional Complex option, which uses higher-quality (and more processor-intensive) time-stretching and is useful for more adventurous techniques where you want to match tracks' keys as well as their tempos. This is absent from Live LE. It has various other limitations, including a maximum of eight clips per channel, although it's not hard to get around this by using additional channels.

Another useful trick is to loop short sections of a track. Hold down Ctrl and drag a clip to duplicate it. Double-click the copy, click the Loop button to the left of the waveform and adjust the Start and End markers above the waveform.

One of the best things about Live is that it's almost impossible to interrupt playback. You can drag a clip from one channel to another, apply effects, change loop points and a vast range of other functions as part of a live performance and playback continues smoothly.

Another feature that's useful for performance is the ability to assign keyboard keys and MIDI controllers to various functions, which is far more efficient than controlling everything with a mouse. To assign a keyboard short cut, press the KEY button at the top-right of the screen, then click and hold any other button as you press a key on the keyboard. This is particularly useful for Clip Launch buttons. If you have a MIDI controller, you can assign knobs and faders to the master tempo or Live's DJ-style crossfader. Click the X at the right of the screen to view the Crossfader controls and assign each mixer channel to channel A or B for the crossfader.

There are lots of other tools for DJs, but with the functions described here you can push a DJ set way beyond what's possible with conventional decks, or the software that emulates them. **BP**



▲ Ableton Live can push DJ sets into new territories, allowing tracks to be remixed as a live performance

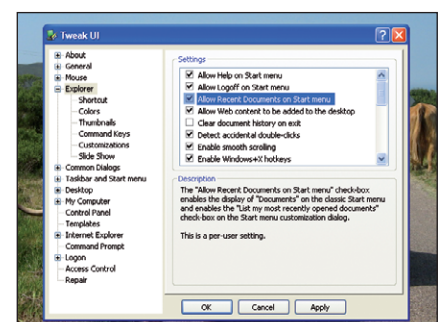
Missing recently opened Excel files

Q I use Excel. Until recently, when I opened the File menu the list of files recently worked on would be displayed, but now they've disappeared. If I look in the Tools, Options, General menu, the box for Recently Used File List is greyed out so I can't select it. I haven't made any changes to my installation of Office. Can you help? *Tom Hughes*

A The most likely explanation is that you've installed the Tweak UI utility from the Microsoft website. This has lots of useful utilities and gives you access to a

variety of settings that improve the usability of Windows (such as getting rid of the recycle bin icon if you prefer a clear desktop). However, it can have this particular side effect. This problem affects all the applications, so you might notice similar behaviour in Word, PowerPoint and so on.

You need to open Tweak UI, and look in the Internet Explorer tab. You'll probably find that the tickbox next to the 'Add new documents to Documents on Start Menu' option is blank. Select this choice, and you should find that your documents in all Office applications will start reappearing. **KE**



▲ Check in Tweak UI to get your recent documents list back